

Dear Mr. Reed:

Thank you for your statement made before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Cairo, Illinois, on March 4, 2002. In your statement you discussed several items of concern to Sny Island Levee Drainage District including the Missouri River Master Manual, progress on the Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers Navigation Study, the Flood Flow Frequency Study, the Comprehensive Plan on the Upper Mississippi River, and the recent proposal concerning cost sharing on Public Law 84-99 flood control repairs.

With regard to the Missouri River Master Manual Review and Update, the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) continues to support Northwestern Division (NWD) efforts to identify an appropriate flow management plan that complies with laws and is consistent with contemporary needs of the Missouri and Mississippi River Basins. MVD has evaluated Mississippi River impacts for over 200 modified reservoir operation alternatives. The most recently evaluated alternatives included plans that incorporate a controlled spring rise and a split Missouri River navigation season. The impacts on Mississippi River flood stages and navigation efficiency were measurable but minor. The plans are beneficial to Mississippi River navigation during the traditionally low flow period of November and December. More detailed evaluations of Mississippi River environmental and dredging impacts are being continued for these alternatives.

-2-

The continuing evaluations were completed in early May 2002. The current NWD schedule for implementing a revision to the Master Manual requires that the Corps identify a Preferred Alternative (PA) by May 31, 2002. Upon identification of the PA, the Corps will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which presents a detailed analysis of the impacts of the PA, will be released this summer. Following a 30-day comment period for the FEIS, the Corps intends to complete ESA consultation on the PA with the USFWS, prepare a Record of Decision, revise the Master Manual itself, and incorporate the revised flow management plan

into the annual operation plan. In its Biological Opinion of November 2000, USFWS recommended that a revised flow management plan be implemented no later than 2003. The Corps intends to have a new flow management plan in place by 2003 to comply with the Service's timeline.

As you noted in your comments, modernizing our system of locks and dams on the upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers is long overdue. The Upper Mississippi and Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study was begun in 1993 to address the need for navigation improvements on the navigation system. The feasibility study was paused in February 2001 in order to assess the results of a review by the National Research Council. The study was resumed in August 2001 and restructured to give equal consideration to fish and wildlife resources along with navigation improvement planning. An Interim Report will be completed in July 2002 that will provide a blueprint for completion of the feasibility study to ensure the waterway system continues to be a nationally treasured ecological resource as well as an effective transportation system. The feasibility study is scheduled for completion in 2004.

Thank you for your support of the Corps' efforts on completion of the Flood Flow Frequency Study. The Flow Frequency Study is scheduled for completion in March 2003. Later this fall we plan to present the preliminary findings of the study during a series of public meetings at various sites along the river system.

-3-

We appreciate your comments about the Corps support on the initiative to develop a Comprehensive Plan for flood control on the upper Mississippi and Illinois River Basins from Cairo to the headwaters of the Mississippi. Initial funding for the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan (UMRCP) was included in this year's appropriations, and preliminary work has begun. The UMRCP will be accomplished at a level of detail similar to the Corps' traditional reconnaissance study. The primary study drivers will be flood damage reduction and environmental sustainability. The study will systemically evaluate both potential structural and non-structural flood damage reduction alternatives and habitat restoration opportunities for those

floodplain areas where flood damages have previously been incurred or potentially could occur. Due to study cost and duration limitations, the plan will address only the management of sediment and nutrients, reduction of bankline erosion, improvement of water quality, recreation needs, and the maintenance of navigation on a very limited basis.

The Commission recognizes your concerns regarding the recent proposal published in the Federal Register concerning Public Law 84-99 procedures and guidelines, specifically that flood control repairs would require 75 percent Federal and 25 percent local cost sharing. Our Headquarters office in Washington is coordinating the review of comments on this proposal.

Thank you again for your presentation before the Commission. We appreciate your supportive comments regarding the work of the Corps of Engineers and look forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
President, Mississippi River
Commission